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ABSTRACT

Vocational education reforms that followed passage of the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act of 1963 initiated the development of many new vocational culinary arts programs that trained high school students with state-of-the art equipment. When the National Consortium of Competency Based Education was established in 1973, it changed the form of instructional methods from occupational to competency based. The redesign of the educational system has changed the culinary industry tremendously. The role of the chef has taken on many new responsibilities. People who enter the food service profession are much better educated. With a higher standard of education and a systematic approach to training, cooks and chefs are now recognized as professionals by the U.S. Department of Education. The desire to improve and provide a base for career education has resulted in a training program for cooks and chefs put together by the Educational Institute of the American Culinary Federation and programs in two-year colleges that follow the same guidelines as members of the National Association of Trade and Technical Schools. Contains eight references. (YLB)

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HOW HAS VOCATIONAL CULINARY ARTS CHANGED AS A RESULT OF A REDESIGN OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

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INTRODUCTION

In the past 35 years many changes have come about as a result of the great strides and support by the government in the area of vocational education. In the field of culinary arts the programs that exist today were but a dream in the beginning of this vocational renaissance. As these dreams become realities the abilities of our craftsman also vastly improved. The result of this is that vocational education has become a precise learning instrument as a result of the "Redesign Of The Education System."

The Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act of 1963 had a major impact on the construction of many modern vocational schools nation wide. Not only did the facilities improve, but the range of courses being offered was overwhelming. At the time this was happening in this country, there were very few schools that offered programs dealing with vocational culinary arts. Today we can see when browsing through Shaw Publications: "Guide to Cooking Schools" that they number in the hundreds.

The usual way of becoming a chef in the past in this country was either through many years of on-the-job training, which at this time was not in any way as sophisticated as the European apprenticeship, or by receiving food service training while in the military. Vocational education reforms initiated the development of many new programs and for the first time students on the high school level were being trained with state of the art equipment in culinary arts.

Constructing these vocational palaces was not enough. To compliment the fine facilities it was important to have a

structured educational base that not only could convey skills and theory to the young students but a means of evaluating as to what level they have attained through this preparation. As a result in 1973, the National Consortium of Competency Base Education was formed. This would change the form of instruction methods from the pre-existing occupational instruction to competency-based. When asked by graduate students in the Vocational Culinary Teacher Education Program at Johnson and Wales University I often refer to the definition given by William G. Perry in his text "How to Develop Competency-Based Vocational Education". He defines an occupational competency as: " A specific job skill that an employer expects an employee to possess in order to obtain and maintain employment."

There are five components that comprise the competency-based system. They are: job title competencies, organized learning activities, the organization of learning resources, testing and evaluation of competency attainment, and organized record keeping. The end result of this program is that prospective employers now have a way of knowing the skill levels of the graduating students by simply checking their records.

Presently many programs have switched to this form of vocational instruction. Many states as a result of legislation will be implementing them shortly. The Massachusetts Department of Education mandated that all schools offering vocational programs have this system in place by September of 1991. Since that time it appears that

it has had an impact on the skill levels of the vocational students in Massachusetts. Furthermore, it has provided a means to help create a uniform curriculum base for the entire Massachusetts vocational education system. The Massachusetts Department of Occupational Education has compiled an excellent training manual which will be the guide for this program.

The redesign of the educational system has had profound effects on all vocational areas. Fortunately for those concerned, it has changed the culinary industry tremendously. The role of the chef today has taken on many new responsibilities. The question, "What is a chef?" was best defined in the October, 1990 issue of the American Culinary Review Angus McIntosh wrote "chef (shef), n, creator; master of innovation; historian; pleasure-giver; recognition-seeker; time-manager; perfectionist; cajoler; consoler; stress victim; craftsman; accountant; student; teacher; comforter; referee; liaison; surrogate parent; story-teller; dishwasher; patriot; preacher; and whipping post. I think that all of us involved in vocational education no matter what your area of expertise can relate to what he was saying. But what we also should convey this to our students is that in todays competitive job-market so many things are needed to be a success, and this is why a solid educational base is important.

Many positive things have come from these educational changes. The quality of people that enter the food service profession today are much better educated than they were even

twenty years ago. There is a higher standard of education, with a systematic approach to training being utilized. No longer do we see the stigma that went along with being in a vocational program. As a result of this and much hard work, finally, in 1976, the United States Department of Labor recognized cooks and chefs as professionals. Until this time they were considered domestics. This came about as a result of strong lobbying by the American Culinary Federation, a national organization of cooks and chefs whose purpose is to promote camaraderie, education, and career enhancement.

In addition to the building of new schools and the development of organized curriculums under the guidelines set by the federal government, other programs have come about as a result of this desire to improve and provide a base for career education. The Educational Institute of the American Culinary Federation, has put together a training program for cooks and chefs. This program has been in place now for almost fifteen years. It provides for an apprenticeship program which lasts for a three year period. During this time the student is supervised by a sponsoring chef. When the training period is over a skills test is given in both theory and practical areas. Upon successful completion the individual receives certification as a certified cook. Many of our two year colleges are now following these guidelines as members of The National Association of Technical and Trade Schools (NATTS) and seem to be more trade oriented than academically focussed.

Much has happened to us in vocational education, and even more continues to go on. The needs of industry and the demands of the public are constantly changing. Those who can adjust and keep up with the changes will be successful, while those who do not may have time pass them by.

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